

HOPE
for a
WOMAN'S
HEART

52 encouraging devotions

PAM TEBOW

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Hope for a Woman's Heart: 52 Encouraging Devotions

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN OUR PLANS ARE UNFULFILLED and the future holds no promise, we cling to the promises of God, who has plans for our welfare, plans for our future, and plans to give us hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When our energy is depleted and we're tempted to give up, we place our hope in the Lord, and He gives us new strength to walk, run, and not get weary (Isaiah 40:31).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When the road ahead is winding and unfamiliar and we wonder what fate awaits us, we remember we don't walk alone. God will

never leave us or forsake us, and He will be with us wherever we go (Matthew 28:20; Joshua 1:9).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When the economic outlook rises and falls like waves of the sea, we can be sure that our lasting hope in Jesus is the anchor of our souls, a hope both sure and steadfast (Hebrews 6:19-20).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When we're paralyzed by regret, we leave the past behind and reach forward to the future with assurance that if we confess our sins, He forgives every one and removes them as far as the east is from the west (1 John 1:9; Psalm 103:12).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When our burdens are so heavy that we stumble under the load, we hear our Savior say, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When loss and grief overwhelm us, we are comforted by the God of all comfort, and we don't grieve like those who

have no hope, for we'll always be with Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When we wonder whether God loves us, even though He knows everything about us, He assures us we are saved by His grace, not because of our deeds (Titus 3:5-7). And He doesn't lie when He promises us the hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When stress and worry consume us, we exchange every anxiety for God's unmistakable peace, a peace unlike anything our world can offer (Philippians 4:6-7).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When we've explored every option and our only alternative is to wait, we wait in silence for God only, because our hope is from Him, and we will not be shaken (Psalm 62:5-8).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When we get the news there is no cure and nothing else can be done, we fix our hope completely on the grace we will receive at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When we are wounded and weary from life's battles, we hold on tight to our hope that everything we encounter in life works together for our good and God's glory and that there will be a happy ending (Revelation 21:6)!

And there is hope for a woman's heart.

When we're told that hope is a theory, a philosophy, or mere conjecture, we remember that hope is a person. Christ Jesus is our hope (1 Timothy 1:1). Real, lasting, life-impacting hope is found in Him alone, and there is no hope apart from God (Ephesians 2:12).

There is hope for a woman's heart.

A NOTE TO MY READERS

As I wrote the following devotions, I identified with every woman who desires hope for her heart. I have needed hope throughout my life—when I first came to faith as a child; when as a college student I learned what it really meant to follow Jesus; when I married Bob and eventually became a mom to five children; when my family left everything we knew and became missionaries in the Philippines; when I underwent life-threatening complications during my pregnancy with my youngest son; when we transitioned back to Florida for a life of ministry here and overseas; and now as I watch my adult

children find their purposes and raise their own families. I have desperately needed hope in God through all the challenges and various circumstances I have faced.

For many years, I have been blessed to speak to groups of women, and before choosing my topic, I inquire about the needs in the church and community. The response from event planners almost always reveals that their women are desperate for encouragement. Hope is lacking, and “hope deferred makes the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12). How many of us travel through our days and our lives with sick hearts? We can go on without people, possessions, and purpose for a little while, but we struggle to go on without hope. Women stand in line following my speaking events to share with me their hurts, fears, and struggles, as well as how the message of hope inspires them to believe that God cares about their pain and sorrow. We bond because our hearts are encouraged by genuine, grace-filled, life-altering hope!

Hope is not speculation, wishful thinking, or reserved for the super Christian. And although we face countless disappointments in our lifetimes, we have the promise that “hope does not disappoint” (Romans 5:5). Hope is in the person of Jesus: “Christ Jesus, who is our hope” (1 Timothy 1:1). When we trust Him as our Savior, we are born again to a living hope (1 Peter 1:3), able to see life from a new perspective.

My definition of hope is “a dynamic confidence that God will come through.” And I love how my husband describes hope: “Hope is the battery in our lives that charges us with resolve and keeps us going. It is the light that shines brightest in the darkness of trials.” The hope we search for is anchored in the Word of God: “For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4). Holding on tight to God and His promises yields hope.

As you read these devotions, my prayer is that you will be reminded of the hope that is ours in Jesus. May that sure hope draw your heart nearer to Him so that when you are tempted to give up hope, you will stand firm: “But as for me, I will hope continually, and I will praise You yet more and more” (Psalm 71:14). Let’s make the choice, day after day, to choose hope for our hearts!

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 15:13

Pam Tebow



OVERWHELMED

DID YOU WAKE UP OVERWHELMED? Your list awaits. So do people with expectations. The sun is barely visible, yet already your in-box is full, your phone is ringing, and your paperwork is stacked up. If only you could block out all of the above and much more. But you know you can't. You're too responsible, or at least you try to give that impression. You don't want to burden your friends because you suspect they are overwhelmed too.

So what next? Do I allow circumstances and responsibilities to overwhelm me? Sometimes I do, but not today. Too much is at stake, because my heart to encourage you requires that I first encourage me. The Bible is full of encouraging verses, but I regularly return to “my” verses. And I suggest you find

yours—ahead of time—before you give in to “overwhelmed” and trade hope for hopelessness, joy for despair, and peace for anxiety.

Talking to ourselves can be a good thing when we speak truth to our overworked brains and discouraged hearts—transformative, powerful, life-impacting biblical truth from God’s heart to ours. These verses from Psalm 62 are some of my favorites:

My soul, wait in silence for God only,
For my hope is from Him.
He only is my rock and my salvation,
My stronghold; I shall not be shaken.
On God my salvation and my glory rest;
The rock of my strength, my refuge is in God.
Trust in Him at all times, O people;
Pour out your heart before Him;
God is a refuge for us.

PSALM 62: 5-8

Today I poured out my heart to my God, my refuge, my hope. Even though we can talk to others when we’re overwhelmed, God is our true source of hope. He is a safe place to pour out our hearts. He already knows everything we’re facing,

but He waits for us to come to Him and tell Him about our heavy load. I came to Him this morning and gave Him my “stuff.” Although my list is still long, and there are more emails, calls, texts, and problems now than when I started to write this devotion, I now have hope. Hope I can’t explain in words. Hope that enables me to keep going. Hope that prevents whatever I wake up to (and all the “add-ons” throughout the day) from shaking me. Hope that stands like a high, protective wall between me and “overwhelmed.”

The psalmist shows us that when we’re overwhelmed, the solution is for us to name all the specific challenges that have the potential to shake us and to give each one to the Lord. Pouring out our hearts to Him is not the power of positive thinking; it’s supernatural therapy. God is never overwhelmed by our issues. He is our stronghold, our rock, our salvation, and our refuge. Whisper a prayer, write a detailed list, or just cry out for help. You can do this while you shower, sit at your desk, or drive the car pool. Don’t wait until you’ve tried everything else. Before you’re shaken, trust the Lord with everything that overwhelms you. It’s a difference maker and a life-changing spiritual habit. I haven’t quite mastered it yet, but I’m working on it.

So when we’re tempted to revert to “overwhelmed,” let’s remind ourselves that our best option is not to pour out our hearts to anyone who will listen. Instead, we’re to wait in silence

for God only, the One we can trust at all times. And nothing can keep us apart from His love. Romans 8:35, 37 says, “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . In all these things we *overwhelmingly* conquer through Him who loved us” (emphasis added).

REFLECTION

On my most recent trip to the Philippines, I witnessed Filipino women carrying heavy loads on their backs or strapped to their heads. They stumbled from the weight and shook as they walked. What an applicable visual for those of us who are overwhelmed by the stuff we lug around through our days and our lives! How can surrendering your heavy load to God bring you hope? Read Psalm 62:5-8 and write down each point the psalmist makes about our responsibility to God and then what God does in return. When you're feeling overwhelmed, pull out this list as a reminder of the unending hope we can find in the Lord.



EN-COURAGE-MENT

MY DAUGHTER KATIE received a special gift this morning that made her day. Her twelve-year-old daughter, Abby, sent her an encouraging email: “I love you soooo much, and I was thinking about how thankful I am for you. You are literally the best mom in THE ENTIRE WORLD and I hope you have a great day!”

Encouragement! The meaning of the word is exactly what it sounds like: to give courage. My husband, Bob, explains that the Greek word for *encouragement* used in the New Testament means to be called alongside to lift up another person. We encourage others when we walk beside them to provide courage, confidence, inspiration, aid, hope, support, and more. Genuine encouragement is a priceless gift to the recipient but

inexpensive for the giver. Why, then, aren't we more intentional about offering courage to the people around us?

Recently I found a journal my mother gave me for Christmas twenty years ago. I wept when I read her inscription on the first page: "This journal would be a good place to begin writing the book that is in your heart." Although I love to write, at that point in my life I could not envision becoming an author. Mom, however, regularly inspired me with the possibility. I wish she had lived to see her dream for me come true.

We may not know until we're in heaven the positive impact of our encouragement on those around us. Wives, we are the best equipped to express belief in our husbands. They need courage to lead, provide, and resist pressure to compromise in a high-pressure world. Our kids need courage to stand alone against the crowd, to pursue their dreams, and to use their unique gifts and abilities to positively impact their world. Friends, neighbors, coworkers, cashiers at the grocery store, nursery workers at church, and others we connect with all benefit from encouragement!

In our hard, abrasive world that beats us up and puts us down, criticism is common and encouragement is rare. But you and I can determine, by God's grace, to be the exceptions, to be alert to opportunities to give courage—such as offering a smile or a kind word, or sending a thoughtful text, email, or

note. We can express interest in those whom others pass by and show belief in those who doubt their abilities or who are on the verge of giving up on their dreams or giving in to temptation.

Paul instructed Timothy to encourage believers whose faith, like his, was tested by persecution (see 2 Timothy 3:12). My missionary daughter, Christy, has a ministry of encouragement to abused, trafficked, and persecuted women in the hard place she serves with her family. Recently she told us about coming alongside these women and initiating the process of healing from horrific pain. She taught them verses like Lamentations 2:19, “Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord,” and encouraged them to spend time alone pouring out their hearts to God. The women later shared how encouraged they were that God loved them enough to hear their cries and care about their hardships. Although most of us may not serve on a mission field where persecution is more obvious, we live in a world that is replete with challenges. We have the privilege to walk beside friends, pastors, relatives, and coworkers to provide the needed support and encouragement to keep on keeping on.

Christian leaders need encouragement to stand alone against opposition. The Lord instructed Moses to encourage Joshua, who would become leader of the Israelites after Moses’ death: “Charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across as the head of this people” (Deuteronomy 3:28).

Jonathan, the son of King Saul, who was pursuing the future King David, “went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God” (1 Samuel 23:16). Think of specific ways to encourage the leaders in your community.

The apostle Paul understood that the early Christians needed courage for the challenges they faced. He wrote that one day Jesus will return, “like a thief in the night,” and told them to “encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 11). Paul not only commended the believers for being encouragers but also instructed them to continue to encourage one another as they anticipated Jesus’ return. His message still applies to Christians living today. While we wait for the return of Jesus, our biblical mandate is to encourage and build up one another.

REFLECTION




This week, ask the Lord to enable you to encourage at least one person each day through spoken or written words. In the process of encouraging others, be encouraged that God is using you to infuse those in your sphere with the courage to live in light of eternity.



A CLUTTERED HEART

I ADMIT TO BEING A COMPULSIVE “NEATNIK,” sidetracked by clutter and mess. Priorities are suspended while I put a misplaced item in the right spot, push in a drawer, straighten a crooked picture, sweep up crumbs, or wipe a messy counter. Annoying clutter in my home distracts me from my primary plan. But what about the clutter in my heart?

Pride, vanity, selfishness, bitterness, jealousy, a judgmental spirit, failure to forgive, and more all distract me from the good plans God has for me. Yet while I rarely ignore the real clutter in my home, I often step over, work around, close my eyes to, or make light of the heart clutter that prevents spiritual victories and spoils my potential for positive influence with people in my sphere.



*Take advantage
of this great trade today:
Exchange sin's clutter for God's
forgiveness, freedom, and peace.*

Although my goal each morning is to address the clutter in my heart with the Lord, it's tempting to skip the unpleasantness. If left unattended, however, accumulated clutter takes over both our homes and our hearts, causing us to stumble. Even if we shove it in a drawer or kick it under the bed, we're still aware of the presence of the clutter we don't take time to deal with. And this is where the analogy breaks down. We can ignore the mounting clutter in our homes with minor repercussions, but we experience life-impacting consequences when we disregard the accumulation of sin cluttering our hearts.

The “neatniks” in my family are outnumbered by the “messies,” but all of us deal with sin's stronghold in our hearts. Even when we know Jesus, we are still sinners who can have victory over sin one minute and then be defeated by our sin the very next. It's a battle we will fight until we go to heaven, and thankfully God's Word includes a plan for daily victory. After Nathan the prophet pointed out King David's sin with Bathsheba, David cried out to the Lord for forgiveness:

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your
lovingkindness;
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out
my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity

And cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
And my sin is ever before me.
Against You, You only, I have sinned
And done what is evil in your sight. . . .

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me to hear joy and gladness.

PSALM 51:1-4, 7-8

I memorized the following four verses and put them to a simple tune so I could hide them in my heart and sing them to myself as a reminder that only the Lord has the power to forgive sin and create in us the clean hearts we long for:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation
And sustain me with a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners will be converted to You.

PSALM 51:10-13

Take time today to deal with the clutter in your heart. A clean house makes us happy, but a clean heart makes us holy. We have the incredible option to trade the heavy burden of sin cluttering our hearts for the joy of clean hearts. When we do, we can share the wonder of God's forgiveness with others, giving us the privilege to influence those around us to know our great God.

REFLECTION

Do you have a regular practice of confessing your sin (in other words, agreeing with God that it is wrong) and asking for God's forgiveness? If not, take time to reread the verses from Psalm 51. Also, consider memorizing a key New Testament verse on forgiveness, 1 John 1:9, known as "the Christian's bar of soap." It's just what we need to cleanse cluttered hearts: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (NKJV). And we don't need to *wait* to remove the *weight*! As soon as we're aware of a sin, we can confess it and receive forgiveness. Take advantage of this great trade today: Exchange sin's clutter for God's forgiveness, freedom, and peace.



THINKING MORE ABOUT HEAVEN

I'VE BEEN THINKING MORE ABOUT HEAVEN because my dear friend since college arrived there today. Her family and friends are grieving their loss. She's the second close friend I lost to breast cancer this month.

I use the word *lost*, but actually, they aren't lost. I know where they are, and I will see them both again. Tears are falling on my computer as I type, though, because I'm among the many people who will miss these incredible women, both of whom left legacies of faithful service and lives well lived. I can't imagine the physical pain of cancer and the emotional pain of leaving loved ones, but even though my friends fought to live on earth, they knew for certain that they would live forever in heaven.

Heaven is a reality! The Bible tells us so. The hope of heaven encourages people who have lost loved ones as well as those of us who are moving closer to life's finish line. Having an eternal perspective also changes the way we live now, or at least it should. But there's often a gap between what we claim to believe about heaven and what we really believe, which affects the way we actually live here on earth. It's natural to be tied tightly to the things we see (our earthly goals, ambitions, or possessions) while we overlook the invisible, biblical reality of what is to come. Our Bibles encourage us to set our minds on things above (see Colossians 3:2), press on toward the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (see Philippians 3:13-14), and store up treasure in heaven (see Luke 12:33-34). But how do we keep from looking at temporal things, which are seen, and focus instead on things that are not seen? Second Corinthians 4:18 reminds us why that's important: "For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever" (NLT).

Both of my friends who recently arrived in heaven focused on what will last. They loved and invested in their families. And when their kids grew older, one friend spent her days driving her van through the back streets of town amid drug pushers, starting a ministry to prostitutes by leading them to Christ, getting them off the streets and drugs, and preparing them for

a new life. The ministry grew to include women exiting prison. My other friend led the prayer teams for her children's schools and later for her city. Through the years, she served in multiple roles where she made an impact for Christ. Grateful recipients of both women's spiritual influence will join them one day, because they thought about heaven long before they arrived.

God has a special plan for every one of us. Though we have a variety of talents, spiritual gifts, jobs, and responsibilities and are in various seasons of life, we share one commonality: We need an eternal mindset—the big picture of why the way we live matters and why all people matter, giving us a reason not to settle for an ordinary life and a purpose big enough to keep us on track all the way to the finish line.

My husband lives with an eternal perspective, which has impacted our family more than words can express. Bob's priorities are focused on people and heaven. An eternal focus motivates us to store up treasure in heaven by investing our resources in people, who will live forever somewhere. Think about what you can do now to impact your eternity and the eternities of those in your sphere—the difference you can make with financial support, prayer, volunteering for a worthy cause, signing up for a mission trip, or sharing Christ with a friend. Parents have a ready-made opportunity to impact their families on earth to live for heaven, but all of us can affect those around us in important

ways. An eternal investment yields eternal dividends, rewards we receive in heaven from our Savior, Jesus.

As I wept for my two friends who died this month, Bob wisely reminded me, “If we could see them now in heaven, we would not wish for them to return.” Philippians 3:20-21 tells us, “We are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control” (NLT). We were created to live on earth with an eternal perspective, because God has placed eternity in our hearts (see Ecclesiastes 3:11).

REFLECTION

How often do you think about the reality of heaven? Consider how you can “set your mind on the things above” (Colossians 3:2) through prayer and Scripture. Decide on one change you would like to make in your life to reflect your renewed eternal perspective and to make your life count for things that last.



GRATITUDE OR GRUMBLING?

IT WAS LATE when I returned to my hotel room. As I kicked off my heels, I heard a baby crying through the paper-thin wall separating my room from my neighbors'. My plan to turn up the air to block the noise failed, since the room's thermostat didn't work. But at least it was time for both the baby and me to call it a night. What a full day: two flights, a late lunch with hosts, a quick change of outfits, my turn to speak, meeting and greeting, and now sleep at last. Or so I thought. As the baby's cries turned to whimpers, the lounge band several floors below began to play their greatest—and loudest—hits.

From birth, our natural inclination is to cry, whine, pout,

and complain when life doesn't go our way. Since our propensity for grumbling is a natural response to objectionable circumstances, a supernatural solution is required. But how do we resist the temptation to permit negative thoughts to give way to negative words that spread like gossip and lice? In order to endure my sleepless night, I needed grace. The same grace I counted on to impact my audience earlier that night would also rescue me from grumbling about annoying circumstances. God's grace in verse form took up residence in my tired brain: "In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Nearly thirty years ago, I put this verse to a tune to teach it to my children. As we focused on each word, I began to understand that complaints are against the Lord, and grumbling is a reaction to His plan. What I intended as a verse for my children, the Lord intended for me to live out. God loves me so much that He prepared me with a weapon sharper than a sword to fight the enemy of grumbling. A few days after committing the verse to memory, I walked out of a store and was hit on the head by a heavy piece of molding that fell from above the doorframe. When I gained consciousness, this verse was spinning in my brain. This reminder to give thanks in all things has become my lifeline to trusting God's plan for me, as well as a blockade

to my human tendency for bitterness and grumbling—then and now.

You have legitimate reasons to grumble too. Life is full of disappointments and challenges: hardships you never signed up for, dreams that failed to materialize, people you counted on who disappointed you, and much more. In our offices, churches, gyms, schools, neighborhoods, and homes, grumbling is epidemic, but gratitude is rare. Why can't we join the grumbling gang with thoughts like *My family doesn't appreciate all I do for them*, *Why did she get the raise?* or *I'm always cleaning up his mess?* Because when our response to *everything* is to display an "attitude of gratitude," we demonstrate the difference our loving, sovereign God makes in our lives. Choosing to trust Him, when we haven't a clue how our stories will end, affords us significant opportunities for influence as "lights" in our dark world. As we read in Philippians 2:14-15, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world."

My gratitude verse continues to impact me as I deal with the long-term effects of that injury from years ago. Recently I quoted it to my spinal neurologist while discussing my

CT scan. He asked me to repeat the verse slowly so he could remember it.

People often ask my husband how he is doing with Parkinson's disease, and he always replies, "Blessed." Bob's response enables him to focus on his countless blessings from the Lord, and it positively impacts the people he greets. One of those is our eleven-year-old grandson, Joe, who was sick for nearly two months while his family was on COVID-19 lockdown in the country where they serve as missionaries. In the midst of his pain and unable to leave his apartment for any reason, Joe was determined to be just like his grandpa and never grumble.

Shortly after I wrote this devotion, Joe and his family were in the last four seats on a plane to America. By God's grace, he didn't have a fever during their thirty-six-hour journey. Although Joe tested negative for COVID-19, he tested positive for parasites and other serious issues that came from living overseas. We are so thankful, though, that through an incredible series of God stories, Joe is now getting the medical help he needs. And he is still not grumbling!

Counting on God's Word and the Holy Spirit who wrote it enables us to make the hard choice, time after time, to choose gratitude over grumbling.

REFLECTION

Memorize “my” verse to prevent grumbling (1 Thessalonians 5:18) or find your own. File it in your brain so you are ready to apply it at a moment’s notice. Halt the negative words before they form in your head and leave your lips. When the urge to grumble is overpowering, take a breath and choose gratitude instead.